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DEPARTMENT OF STATE	
WASHINGTON	
REVIEWED BY	DATE
<i>[Signature]</i>	August 10, 1980
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Dear Mr. Zalaquett:

Secretary Muskie has asked me to respond to your letter of June 24 concerning United States security assistance to El Salvador. I am also responding, very belatedly, to the similar concerns raised in Martin Ennals' letter to me of February 29; that letter was unfortunately misplaced in the Department.

El Salvador faces major problems, including severe political polarization, bitter class antagonisms, serious economic deprivation and a legacy of repressive government. Escalating violence leading to civil war is a real possibility. The United States Government supports the program of the Revolutionary Junta of Government (JRG) because we believe that program offers the best means of achieving vitally needed socio-economic reforms, furthering democratic processes, and restoring peace. The largest element of our support for this reform and development program is approximately \$53 million of bilateral economic assistance. Our security assistance totals \$5.7 million in non-lethal equipment, much of which is only now beginning to be delivered.

The political extremes of both right and left are opposing the JRG with terrorist violence in an effort to bring about its failure. There has been a dramatic increase in terrorist activities of both right and left since the Junta began implementing its agrarian reform program on March 6.

If the reform program is to provide non-violent change to El Salvador, public order under the rule

Mr. Jose Zalaquett,
Chairman, International Executive Committee,
Amnesty International,
10 Southampton Street,
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of law must be established and the reform process protected. To do this the government will have to be able to exert effective control over political violence from all sources.

To assist the government in achieving such control, we have decided to extend a moderate amount of security assistance. We have provided approximately \$6 million in credits for the purchase of basic transportation, communications and riot control equipment. The purpose of this equipment is to improve the security forces' capacity properly to carry out their legitimate mission. Improved communications, for example, should enhance command control over the security forces operating in the field and increase the ability of Salvadoran authorities to enforce standing orders not to abuse human rights.

The riot control training and equipment provided last November after the overthrow of General Romero were intended to avert the massive loss of life often associated with more violent methods of riot control. We believe the use of such training and equipment (for example, during last November's serious public disorder) have reduced, not increased, loss of life. The Junta's enactment of El Salvador's first gun control law should also help to prevent demonstrations from degenerating into violent encounters between armed demonstrators and the security forces.

Mr. Ennals' letter refers to abuses committed by the National Democratic Organization (ORDEN). As indicated in Mr. Ennals' letter, that organization was dissolved by the Junta soon after it came to power last October. We had consistently urged the Romero Government to disband the organization. We fully agree with your condemnation of the activities of ORDEN and other extremist organizations. We have also made clear to the JRG our opposition to the existence or activities of any para-military organization engaged in violence or lawless acts.

United States policy toward El Salvador seeks to prevent civil war, through support for economic and social reforms, and the establishment of democratic government committed to the promotion of human rights. These objectives are basic to all our assistance efforts to the JRG, both in the economic and security areas. We would not continue any assistance which we believed was being used for repressive purposes.

We appreciate having the opportunity to maintain a dialogue with Amnesty International on the situation in El Salvador. A senior official of our Inter-American Affairs Bureau will be contacting your Washington, D.C. office to offer to arrange a detailed briefing for representatives of your organization.

Sincerely,



Warren Christopher
Acting Secretary

Copy to:

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